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BOOK REVIEWS.

A History Syllabus for Secondary Schools. Outlining the Four Years' Course in History Recommended by the Committee of Seven of the American Historical Association. By a Special Committee of the New England History Teachers' Association. HERBERT D. FOSTER, Chairman. Boston: D. C. Heath & Co., 1904.

This *Syllabus* is designed to furnish "practical methods of teaching history, with such topical outlines, references, and bibliographies" as shall aid in effecting a reform in history-teaching in secondary schools. The outlines are said to have been subjected to classroom tests, and to revision by competent teachers; they certainly appear to be carefully balanced. The committee recommends that a printed outline be given both teacher and pupil to use with the textbook. The "General Introduction" is followed by a "Special Introduction" for each course, and altogether the *Syllabus* is a worthy companion volume to *History in Schools*, already published.

Much sensible advice may be found in the introductions. For example, the committee insists (p. 17) that history is the most difficult of all subjects; that essays in history be accepted also for credit in English (p. 23); that methods, however virtuous, in themselves must be modified to meet particular conditions (p. 32); and that good teachers are really independent of text and syllabus (p. 43). If only a portion of this advice is faithfully applied, much good will be accomplished.

In spite of the frequent revisions this report has enjoyed, there remain several serious defects. Among these is the indiscriminate praise of textbooks in ancient history (pp. 31 f.). It is also difficult to see how young students can get the essential characteristics of remote periods from historical fiction without acquiring at the same time much matter that is unhistorical (p. 28). If vividness is sought, let it be attached to important events. Moreover, many teachers will quarrel with the committee concerning the relative importance of certain topics. In American history, for example, eight exercises are devoted to the Civil War, while only nine are given to events since 1865. Is this a fair division for those whose training in citizenship is nearly concluded?

Still more serious is the evident application of college methods to secondary instruction. The committee is almost wholly composed of college professors, and naturally expects (p. 123) that the fifteen-year-old boy "should learn to distinguish good, scholarly books from bad, superficial ones." Yet it is admitted in another place (p. 44) that there is danger of confusion in the midst of so much reading, so many topical reports, and such illustrative matter. The problem of time for so many exercises is already very serious and most critics will agree that the committee has overshot the mark. None of the four *Syllabi* should be placed in the hands of those lower than the senior year, but the book should be widely used by the teachers, by college examiners, and by many college students who need just such helps.

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